MARVEL

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DOCTOR STRANGE

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STEPHEN STRANGE was a pre-eminent surgeon until a car accident damaged the nerves in his hands. His ego drove him to scour the globe for a magical cure. Instead, he found a mysterious wizard called the Ancient One, who taught him the mystic arts and opened his eyes to the magic behind reality. Seeking power to defeat Doctor Doom, who'd usurped the mantle of Sorcerer Supreme of Earth, Doctor Strange became Sorcerer Supreme of Asgard--only to find himself stranded there after Thor's death. The wary denizens of the Nine Realms call him...

DOCTOR STRANGE

When Strange attempted to resolve a conflict between the Light Elves and Angels by unsealing an ancient coffin, he released the dark wizard Vyrbodin, who used scythe magic generated from lost potential to conjure a sinister double of the Angelic Regent's daughter Rhialla. During his escape, Vyrbodin announced his intent to murder all the children in the Nine Realms to create an infinite source of lost potential, which led Strange and Angela to realize that, though there were no children in Heven, Vyrbodin could still get what he wanted by killing Heven's Anchorites--rare male Angels safeguarded for reproductive purposes. But the realization came too late--Gallipheron the Hierophant was gravely wounded while the Anchorites and Regent Idyl were slaughtered!

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HEVEN.

I THOUGHT SHE WAS ETERNAL.

I THOUGHT MY MOTHER WOULD BE FOREVER BEAUTIFUL AND FOREVER STRONG AND FOREVER WISE.

I THOUGHT I COULD DEPEND ON HER FOR ANYTHING. FOR EVERYTHING.

BUT ETERNITY IS NOT WHAT IT ONCE WAS, AND NOW I AM...WITHOUT.

DEATH IS NOT THE END FOR US, RHIALLA. WE THOUGHT IT WAS, BUT THERE IS *MORE* OUT THERE.

LOVE *PERSISTS.*

I SHOULD LEAVE. IF YOU WANT TO STAY, TO BE WITH YOUR PEOPLE, I UNDERSTAND.

WE HAVE A *CONTRACT*, STRANGE.

HEVEN HAS NEVER BEFORE EXPERIENCED AN *ATTACK* LIKE THIS. WITHOUT THEIR QUEEN, THE ANGELS ARE LOOKING TO--

I *KNOW* TO WHOM THE ANGELS ARE LOOKING, BUT THEY ARE IN SHOCK AND LOOKING IN THE *WRONG DIRECTION.*

I HAVE KNOWN PEOPLE MORE *FORMIDABLE* THAN ANGELA--BUT NOT MANY.

AND IN TRUTH, I AM GLAD OF HER CONTINUED SUPPORT.

NAVIGATING THE INTRICACIES OF HEVEN IS A DELICATE PROCESS--

--WHERE WIELDING A *BLUNT INSTRUMENT* IS SOMETIMES THE ONLY WAY TO GET QUICK ANSWERS.

YOU, *SHORT ANGEL*. WILL GALLIPHERON *DIE?*

MY NAME IS--

I DO NOT CARE.

IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL. HE TRIED TO DEFEND THE DEFENSELESS, THOUGH, AND SO HE IS OWED OUR BEST ATTEMPTS.

AAAARGH!

FOR HIEROPHANTS, IT SEEMS, THE *HEALING* HURTS WORSE THAN THE *WOUNDING.*

I HAVEN'T SLEPT FOR 37 HOURS, BUT A QUICK ***REINVIGORATION SPELL*** TAKES CARE OF THAT.

KEEPING UP WITH GODS AND ANGELS MEANS THERE'S PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME FOR--

AND WHAT IS ***THIS?***

TELEPORTATION TECHNOLOGY INCORPORATING ***MAGICAL GLYPHS?*** I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH A CONFIGURATION. DO YOU KNOW THE RANGE OF--?

YOU MEAN IS IT POWERFUL ENOUGH TO OPEN A PORTAL BACK TO ***MIDGARD?*** DOUBTFUL.

BUT IT WOULD BE BETTER, I THINK, FOR YOU TO FOCUS ON THE TASK ***AT HAND.***

I AM AWARE OF MY DUTIES, ANGELA.

GOOD. BECAUSE WE ***ALL*** HAVE OUR CONTRACTS.

GALLIPHERON'S FELLOW HIEROPHANTS ARE SCOURING THE COSMOS LOOKING FOR VYRBODIN, BUT WHILE THEY POSSESS THE VENGEFUL ***WRATH,*** THEY LACK THE REQUISITE ***SKILL.***

I WILL FIND VYRBODIN AND HIS DARK DAUGHTER, AND I WILL MAKE THEM ***PAY*** FOR THE SLAUGHTER OF THE ANCHORITES.

THAT IS ***MY*** CONTRACT WITH ***THEM.***

NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME, I ALMOST FEEL A TWINGE OF SYMPATHY FOR THE KILLERS WE'RE TRACKING.

ALMOST.

THIS SHACK OF YOURS IS GETTING CROWDED, VYRBODIN.

THIS SHACK OF *OURS*, DARK DAUGHTER, AND DO NOT FRET--YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WILL SOON BE LEAVING THIS NEST.

I DARE SAY YOU'LL MISS THEM WHEN THEY'RE GONE!

MISS THEM? THEY *LURK* AND *GLARE* AND BARELY *SPEAK.* THEY ARE OF *NO COMPANY* TO *ME.*

UNLIKE THE ONE YOU SENT AWAY. SHE WAS *DIFFERENT* FROM THE OTHERS.

WAS SHE? I HADN'T NOTICED.

WHY ARE WE THE ONLY ONES ABLE TO *THINK?*

"WHY ARE WE THE ONLY ONES ABLE TO THINK...?"

...

FATHER.

GASP! SHE CALLED ME DADDY!

YOU CAN THINK AND SPEAK BECAUSE YOU WERE MY FIRST, AND SO YOU ARE WORTHY.

AND THE ONE YOU HAVE SENT AWAY? WHY DID *SHE* RECEIVE THIS EXTRA CARE?

BECAUSE SHE IS MY MOTHER.

OR SHE *WAS* MY MOTHER.

OR SHE IS SOME DARK VERSION OF THE *WOMAN* WHO WAS MY MOTHER.

SENTIMENTALITY?

IT SURPRISES YOU THAT I AM CAPABLE OF SUCH THINGS?

IT SURPRISES ME THAT YOU BROUGHT SOMEONE TO LIFE OUT OF *LOVE.*

LOVE?

OH, NO. OH, NO, NO, *NO*, MY DEAR.

IT IS NOTHING BUT *RANK* AND *PETTY REVENGE.*

ALFHEIM.

QUEEN AELSA IS NOT TO BE DISTURBED BY THE LIKES OF *MERCENARIES* AND *MORTALS.*

QUEEN AELSA IS A BEING OF *CULTURE* AND *BEAUTY,* SO WHATEVER YOU ARE HERE TO BEG FOR, YOU WILL NEED TO SCROUNGE IT FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE.

YOU SEEM NICE.

WE JUST NEED A QUICK CHAT.

NOW THAT REGENT IDYL IS DEAD, AELSA'S THE ONLY PERSON WE KNOW WHO HAS ACTUALLY *INTERACTED* WITH VYRBODIN.

HYUK!

QUEEN AELSA?

IF WE COULD HAVE A MOMENT OF YOUR--?

AGH!!!

THE INHALATIONS OF TIÐINAR!

THERE ARE OCCASIONS IN THIS LIFE WHEN YOU SIMPLY ***DO NOT HAVE*** THE OPPORTUNITY TO THINK.

WHICH MAKES ONE GRATEFUL FOR ASGARDIAN SPELLS THAT STOP TIME FOR EVERYTHING ***EXCEPT*** MY THOUGHTS. A USEFUL TRICK--

--BUT ONE THAT WILL EXACT A ***PRICE.***

AND SINCE I'M STILL RECOVERING FROM USING THE ***BRACELETS OF STRIFE AND REGRET,*** PAYING THAT TOLL IS NOT SOMETHING I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO.

BUT AT LEAST IT LETS ME IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY TO BOTH ***SAVE*** THE LIFE OF QUEEN AELSA AND ***LINE UP*** HER WOULD-BE ASSASSIN IN ANGELA'S SIGHTS.

WHAT?

UNN!

QUEEN AELSA! RUN!

NO! NO, DON'T! THAT IS ALYDENNAI! THAT IS MY DAUGHTER!

BUT YOUR DAUGHTER IS--

UGH!

ALYDENNAI, MY LOVE, DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE ME? LOOK UPON MY FACE, LISTEN TO MY VOICE...

MY HEART HAS BROKEN FOR YOU EVERY DAY SINCE YOU WERE TAKEN FROM ME.

SHE'S DEAD?

DEAD?

DO I LOOK DEAD TO YOU?

QUEEN AELSA, GET BACK!

A SLIVER OF MY ASTRAL SELF PEELS OFF, TAKING THE *PILGRIMAGE SHROUD* WITH IT.

BEING SORCERER SUPREME OF ASGARD HAS BROUGHT WITH IT AN ASTONISHING NUMBER OF ***NEW WONDERS*** TO BEHOLD.

BUT I DO STILL LONG FOR HOME--

--A PLACE WHERE NOT EVERY ***SINGLE*** PERSON I MEET IS ***SIGNIFICANTLY STRONGER*** THAN I AM.

WHAK

AND SPEAKING OF SIGNIFICANTLY STRONGER--

WHERE IS HE, DEMON? ***WHERE IS VYRBODIN?***

I'LL CRUSH YOUR SKULL AND FEED--

PARAKKION'S WAR MACE!

UGH!

WHAT MANNER OF WORLD IS THIS? WHAT TRICKERY OF *REBIRTH* OR *AFTERLIFE* OR *TORMENT* MUST I BE SUBJECTED TO?

THIS WORLD IS OF THE *LIVING*, MY DAUGHTER, A WORLD YOU LEFT SO, SO LONG AGO.

AND I AM RETURNED? MY MEMORIES ARE A CONFUSION OF...

ULYNNR. WHERE IS ULYNNR?

LONG DEAD, I HOPE.

YOU *NEVER* APPROVED OF HIM! AND OF *COURSE* YOU COULDN'T!

HE WAS BUT A POOR POET WHO COULD ONLY OFFER ME *LOVE* AND *HAPPINESS* AND A *MIRACLE!*

WHEN ALL OF OUR SOOTHSAYERS PREDICTED I COULD NEVER BEAR CHILDREN, ULYNNR GAVE ME *MY CHILD!*

HE DID. HE GAVE YOU *VYRBODIN.*

AND THEN HE *TOOK YOU AWAY* FROM ME.

OH, BUT I WAS *HAPPY*, MOTHER!

HE GAVE ME A SIMPLE LIFE BUT A HAPPY ONE!

UNTIL YOUR BELOVED'S DREAMS BEGAN.

DO YOU REMEMBER, ALYDENNAI, THAT YOU FEARED FOR YOUR *SAFETY*, AND THAT OF YOUR *CHILD*?

DO YOU REMEMBER TALKING TO ME OF *RETURNING* TO THE PALACE WITH VYRBODIN?

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR HUSBAND *TAKING* THE CHILD AND *DISAPPEARING*?

DO I REMEMBER THE LOSS OF *MY OWN SON*, MOTHER?

YES, I DO!

ALL THOSE YEARS ULYNNR HAD TO TURN HIM *AGAINST* ME! ALL THOSE YEARS TO *DRIP POISON* INTO HIS EAR!

AND WHEN HE RETURNED TO ALFHEIM, HE RETURNED TO *KILL ME!*

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS *LIKE*, MOTHER? TO HAVE YOUR OWN CHILD COME TO--

--KILL YOU?

...WHAT AM I?

YOU ARE ONE OF VYRBODIN'S CREATIONS.

HE TAKES WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN AND FROM IT CREATES CREATURES TO DO HIS BIDDING.

MY SON DID THIS TO ME?

I AM NOT ***HER***, MOTHER. MY THOUGHTS BECOME CLEARER.

HE SENT ME TO ***KILL YOU*** AND WREAK HAVOC ON THE STREETS, TO ***SLAUGHTER*** MY PEOPLE...

...TO KILL THE MAGICIAN AND THE ANGEL.

HIS ACTIONS THIS DAY, THOUGH ***MALICIOUS***, I CAN FORGIVE, FOR HE HAS BROUGHT MY SWEET ALYDENNAI BACK TO ME.

YOU CAN YET ***HELP US***, ALYDENNAI. YOU CAN TELL US WHERE HE IS.

VYRBODIN. MY SON.

ULYNNR KEPT HIM FROM ME AS HE GREW FROM CHILD TO MAN, AND THEN MY SON RETURNED TO ALFHEIM.

DO YOU REMEMBER, MOTHER, HIS DISGUISE?

HE BECAME ***AERLYG***, AN ADVISOR OF POLITICS AND AN EXPLOITER OF CIRCUMSTANCE.

HE ADVISED ME. MY OWN SON ADVISED ME IN MY ROLE AS PRINCESS, AND I DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM.

HE TOOK A ***WIFE*** WHILE HE WAS HERE AND HAD ***CHILDREN.***

HE HAD AN ABILITY TO ***STEAL THE MEMORIES*** OF OTHERS, AND HE USED IT WELL. HE BECAME INVALUABLE TO MY DAUGHTER. TO THE ***KINGDOM.***

BUT SOMEONE DISCOVERED HIS ABILITY, REVEALING IT TO THE REALM AND PROVOKING ACCUSATIONS OF ***BETRAYAL*** AND ***SUBTERFUGE.***

SUCH WAS THE ANGER THAT HE RETURNED HOME TO FIND THAT HIS FAMILY HAD BEEN ***MURDERED.***

MY GREAT ***GRANDCHILDREN***, TAKEN BEFORE I EVEN KNEW THEM.

HE RETURNED, YEARS LATER, AS A POWERFUL SORCERER, INTENDING TO KILL EVERY LAST CHILD IN THE REALMS IN A ***GRAND ACT*** OF OUTRAGEOUS REVENGE.

BEFORE ODIN SENT THE ANGELS TO END HIS THREAT, VYRBODIN MURDERED ALYDENNAI. HE MURDERED MY BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER.

I AM A SCYTHE.

THAT IS WHAT HE CALLS ME. WHAT HE CALLS US, THE WEAPONS HE WIELDS AGAINST HIS ENEMIES.

YOU NEED NOT BE A WEAPON. YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN A CHANCE AT A NEW LIFE, AT A SECOND LIFE.

YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN BACK YOUR IMMORTALITY.

THIS IS NOT LIVING, MY QUEEN.

I AM A MOCKERY OF THE DAUGHTER YOU KNEW, AN ECHO OF THE PRINCESS OUR REALM NEEDED.

CAN YOU HELP US?

CAN YOU TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR SON THAT WE CAN USE TO STOP HIM FROM HURTING OTHERS?

HE WAS RAISED TO BELIEVE THAT ALL OF WHAT IS WAS GOING TO BE DESTROYED BY THE CREATURE FROM HIS FATHER'S DREAMS.

HE WAS TAKEN IN BY THE SKRAVAREDE, OF THE OLD STONES, IN VANAHEIM, AND SHOWN THE ANCIENT WAYS OF MAGIC.

MAYBE YOU CAN FIND THE ANSWERS YOU SEEK THERE.

I AM NOT YOUR DAUGHTER, THOUGH I HAVE HER *MEMORIES.*

VYRBODIN CONJURED ME INTO BEING AS PUNISHMENT FOR BOTH OF US.

AS SUCH, HE ALLOWED ME TO MAINTAIN THIS ILLUSION OF... *ESSENCE.*

YOUR DAUGHTER LOVED YOU *VERY MUCH,* MY QUEEN.

WHEN SHE DIED, HER LAST THOUGHTS WERE OF YOU, AND SHE REGRETTED EVERY *OUNCE* OF DISAPPOINTMENT SHE'D EVER CAUSED YOU.

I WAS *NEVER* DISAPPOINTED. I NEVER *COULD* BE.

I LOVE YOU, MOTHER.

TO LEAVE A MOTHER--GRIEVING FOR HER CHILD FOR A ***SECOND*** TIME--IS A SHAMEFUL RELIEF. THANKFULLY, OUR PURSUIT TAKES US ELSEWHERE, TO ***VANAHEIM.***

A LAND OF VAST FORESTS AND IMPOSSIBLE CASTLES AND HOME TO THE VANIR.

EVERY REALM, IT SEEMS, IS MORE ***BEAUTIFUL*** THAN THE LAST.

WHEN CONFRONTED WITH PARADISE AFTER PARADISE, ONE DOES BEGIN TO WONDER HOW WE COULD HAVE ***SQUANDERED*** WHAT WE HAD ON EARTH.

YOU'RE THINKING AGAIN OF MIDGARD.

HOW DID YOU KNOW?

YOU GROW QUIET AND BORING.

MIDGARD IS A BRANCH THAT HAS BEEN CUT FROM THE ***WORLD TREE.***

IT WILL EITHER ***WITHER AND DIE***, OR SOMEWHAT MORE UNLIKELY, IT WILL SET ITS OWN ROOTS AND THRIVE.

WHATEVER ITS FATE, IT NOW HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH ***YOU***, STRANGE.

THIS IS THE CAMP OF THE SKRAVAREDE. THIS IS WHERE YOUR FOCUS SHOULD BE. NOT ON HOW TO RETURN HOME.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS THINKING ABOUT.

IT REALLY, *REALLY* WAS.

I WAS MERELY THINKING OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUR REALMS.

THESE SKRAVAREDE WERE FELLED EONS AGO, AND WHILE DECOMPOSITION IS ADVANCED, THEY HAVE NOT YET CRUMBLED TO DUST.

SUCH IS THE WAY OF IMMORTALITY, STRANGE.

THESE PEOPLE WERE SLAUGHTERED, AND WHATEVER ANSWERS THEY HAD DIED WITH THEM.

APART FROM...

...YOU.

AN ORB OF DULL METAL. HOW THRILLING.

THERE'S AN... ENERGY INSIDE, AN ***ENERGY*** I CAN'T IDENTIFY. I SEE NO WAY TO OPEN IT.

PERHAPS IF I ***CHOP IT*** WITH MY ***SWORD.***

AS ***SHARP*** AS YOUR SWORD IS AND AS ***FIERCE*** AS THAT CHOP WOULD BE--

--THIS ORB WOULD RESIST A ***PHYSICAL*** ATTACK AS EFFECTIVELY AS IT IS RESISTING A ***MAGICAL*** ONE.

THAT ***IS*** INTERESTING.

SO WHATEVER IT CONTAINS IS WORTH CONTAINING.

YOU HAVE A THEORY.

THEORIES ARE FOR THE WEAK. I HAVE DECIDED WHAT I ***KNOW.***

VYRBODIN HAS STORED THE SECRET TO HIS UNIQUE IMMORTALITY WITHIN THAT ORB. HE ATTEMPTED TO HIDE IT ***HERE,*** BELIEVING IT SAFE.

WHEN WE OPEN IT, HE WILL BE ***VULNERABLE.***

THAT IS A POSSIBIL--

BEEP BEEP

YOUR GAUNTLET IS BEEPING.

THE ANGELS ARE CONTACTING ME.

ARE YOU GOING TO ANSWER?

THE ANGELS NEED TO ***STOP*** CONTACTING ME.

THEY'RE JUST LOOKING FOR GUIDANCE.

I AM NOT THEIR QUEEN. I AM--

BAH!

WHAT IS IT?

ANGELA, WE HAVE **FOUND** VYRBODIN!

WHERE?

RHIALLA IS LEADING A CHOIR OF ANGELS TO **DISMEMBER HIM BLOODILY,** BUT... BUT I FEAR--

WHERE IS HE, DAMN YOU?

SVARTALFHEIM.

BUT--NO! THE DARK ELVES WILL SEE THAT AS AN INVASION!

"RHIALLA'S GOING TO START A ***WAR.***"

TO BE CONTINUED!

NEXT

A BATTLE FOR HEVEN AND EARTH!

After uncovering the dark wizard Vyrbodin's secret lair, Strange and Angela are closer than ever to capturing him. But the centuries-old rivalry between the ANGELS and DARK ELVES may put a wrench in their plans as the two groups battle over who gets to take their revenge against the wizard. Can Strange and Angela stop the conflict before a second WAR OF THE REALMS breaks out?

THE MAGIC CONTINUES THIS MONTH IN...

Send letters to **MHEROES@MARVEL.COM** and mark them **"OKAY TO PRINT"** for a chance to see them answered in future issues!